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FM AMEMBASSY DAMASCUS  
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RUEHAM/AMEMBASSY AMMAN 5942  
RUEHLB/AMEMBASSY BEIRUT 3808  
RUEHEG/AMEMBASSY CAIRO 2319  
RUEHRH/AMEMBASSY RIYADH 7014  
RUEHTV/AMEMBASSY TEL AVIV 0974  
RUEHAK/AMEMBASSY ANKARA 4389  
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DEPARTMENT FOR PA, NEA/ARN, INR/IC/CD, INR/S:STHIBEAULT AND  
JMCCARTER, VOA NEWS CA, NEA/PPD:CBOURGEOIS, DBENZE AND  
AFERNANDEZ, IIP/G/NEA-SA RWINCHESTER  
WHITE HOUSE FOR NSC  
CENTCOM FOR CCPA

E.O. 12958: N/A

TAGS: KMDR PREL KPAO OPRC SY

SUBJECT: Damascus Media Reaction: Syria/Palestinians,  
Syria/Sudan, Meqdad/Anan, Syria/Lebanon (5/11)

**¶1. Summary:** Papers reported that the Palestinian government thanked President Asad for the Syrian fund-raising campaign for the Palestinian people and for receiving 244 Palestinian refugees coming from Iraq. That came in a phone call President Asad received from Palestinian Prime Minister Ismail Hanieh and a cable of appreciation from Ali Mustafa, General Director of the General Board of Palestinian Refugees in Syria. Farouk al-Qaddoumi, Head of the PLO Political Bureau, also expressed appreciation of Syria's support during his meeting with Ahmad Abdul Karim, Chairman of the Syrian Arab Popular Committee for Support of Palestinians.

Syrian papers also reported that Mustafa Otham Ismail, the visiting Sudanese Presidential Advisor, held talks with Foreign Minister Walid Al-Mouallem that focused on Syrian-Lebanese relations, developments in the occupied territories, and the situation in Iraq. FM Mouallem thanked Sudan for its efforts, as a chairman of the Arab summit, to boost inter-Arab relations and Arab solidarity. Dr. Ismail announced in a press statement that preparations are underway to hold a Joint Syrian-Sudanese ministerial committee meeting, noting that investment projects have been proposed by both sides to cement cooperation. Ismail also held talks with President Asad and Vice President Shara to update them on events in the Arab arena, mainly in Iraq and Lebanon. Talks also touched upon the latest developments in Darfur.

Papers reported that UN SecGen Kofi Anan had a meeting with Deputy Foreign Minister Faisal Meqdad during which Anan underlined Syria's vital role in the region. Anan also reiterated the importance of implementing all UN resolutions related to the Palestinian issue and the Middle East, stressing the necessity of not exposing the Palestinian people to more problems, particularly after the latest democratic elections. Dr. Meqdad underscored the main role of the international organization in easing tension in the region. "It is important to exert more pressure to make Israel implement UN resolutions and withdraw from the occupied Arab land in order to realize a just and comprehensive peace in the Middle East," Dr. Meqdad said. Both sides underlined the importance of the UN role in Iraq and expressed full support for the Lebanese national dialogue, noting

the need to provide appropriate conditions to make the dialogue a succeed.

Syrian papers also featured Information Minister Mohsen Bilal's interview with Al-Manar satellite channel, in which he said that "Syrian media will always be an honest conveyor of information to Syrian, Arab and International societies and public opinion.... The Minister said that Syria looks positively at the Lebanese national dialogue and wishes to have a unified and healthy Lebanon. "Damascus's doors are always open to all honest and national Lebanese who want to work hard to establish brotherly and distinguished relations between Syria and Lebanon," he clarified, stressing that those who work against this are working against history and geography. The minister warned against turning Lebanon into a conduit and base for conspiracies against Syria. "We hope that Lebanon will not turn into an executive of its foreign embassies' orders," he added, recalling all the sacrifices Syria has made to protect Lebanon's security and stability. "Supporting the Lebanese resistance is our choice until a just and comprehensive peace is achieved in the region," he said. Dr. Bilal stressed Syria's commitment to UN resolutions and Iraq's unity, stability and sovereignty. He criticized the US double-standards policy regarding Israel, a policy that rejects UN resolutions, particularly resolutions 242, 338, 425 and 104, which stipulates the Palestinians' right of return.

End of summary.

## 12. Selected Headlines:

"President Asad receives a phone call from Palestinian Prime Minister Ismail Hanieh, who thanks Syria for standing by the Palestinian people. President Asad also receives a cable of amity and loyalty from Ali Mustafa, General Director of the General Board of Palestinian Refugees in Syria, thanking him for

receiving Palestinian children, women and men after a tough and bitter siege at the Iraqi and Jordanian borders" (Government-owned Tishreen, 5/11)

"Vice-President Farouk al-Shara and Foreign Minister Walid al-Mouallem discuss with Mustafa Otham Ismail, Sudanese Presidential Advisor, the latest developments in the region, and welcome agreement on Darfur" (Government-owned Tishreen, 5/11)

"Information Minister Dr. Mohsen Bilal says in a meeting with Lebanese Satellite TV Channel al-Manar: We welcome everyone who works to establish distinguished relations between Syria and Lebanon" (Government-owned Tishreen, 5/11)

"UN SecGen Kofi Annan meets Deputy Foreign Minister Dr. Faisal Miqdad in New York and stresses Syria's pivotal role in the Middle East" (Government-owned Tishreen, 5/11)

"A huge demonstration sweeps Beirut protesting the economic policy of the Lebanese government. Lahoud: The Lebanese are fed up with promises. Aoun: The cabinet is impulsive towards Lebanese citizens' sufferings. Israeli warplanes violate Lebanese air space. Israeli forces shell South Lebanon" (Government-owned Tishreen, 5/11)

## 13. Editorial Block Quotes:

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"A Compass for those Who Have Lost Direction"

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Khalid al-Ashhab, an editorialist in government-owned Al-Thawra, wrote (5/11): "Syria, in the past 30 years, stopped the bloodshed in Lebanon and protected the Lebanese from one another....

"There is no crisis of confidence between Lebanon and Syria. The crisis of confidence is between Lebanon and Lebanon, between the genuine Arab Lebanon of resistance, which has not disavowed itself or its blood, which is mixed with the blood of its sisterly Syria, and the Lebanon of embassies, slogans, and bombs....

"Lebanon needs to rise against those who have misled, sold, and bought it, and who are today bargaining over its resistance and destiny...."

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#### "Political Diversity and Multiple Powers"

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Adnan Ali, a commentator in government-owned Al-Thawra, wrote (5/11): "The Gaza clashes between HAMAS and Fatah militants once again underline the need to order the Palestinian home on a sound basis and to direct the guns only toward the Israeli enemy.

"The various Palestinian parties need to shoulder their responsibilities and address their differences frankly, giving the higher interest of the Palestinian people precedence over all personal and party interests....

"Both HAMAS and Fatah are in power.... The two factions must quickly find a formula not only to live together peacefully, but also to achieve understanding and work jointly to serve the interests of the Palestinian people...."

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#### "Before the Collapse of Basra"

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Isam Dari, an editorialist in government-owned Tishreen, commented (5/11): "There must be effective Arab solidarity to confront the dangers that are coming from the West and from Israel....

"These dangers threaten all Arabs without exception.... The Greater Middle East is meant to be built on the rubble of Arab countries and under an Israeli leadership....

"What makes things worse is that Arabs themselves help these plans, sometimes willingly and sometimes by complying with foreign dictates.

"Arabs still have a chance to end this bizarre situation and confront the threats.... All they need is resolve, determination, and unity around one courageous position capable of facing the storms....

"The United States can break every Arab country separately, but it cannot break the will of the nation if it is united."

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#### "Lack of Vision"

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Hikmat Fakah, a commentator in government-owned Al-Thawra, wrote (5/11): "Donald Rumsfeld stated recently that no one was able to predict how long the Iraq war would last.... The only meaning of this is that the United States uses its power haphazardly and undertakes war whose objectives and results it does not know....

"This endangers American interests and causes damage to others.... The presence of people like Rumsfeld in power is a looming danger...."

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